

FEATURES

VM1 SATELLITES

Drive units: 1 x 125mm cone bass/mid, 25mm tweeter

Enclosure type: Bass reflex, rear vented

Frequency response: 75Hz-20kHz +/-3dB

Crossover frequency: 3.5kHz

Sensitivity: 91dB/m @2.83V

Impedance: 8Ω nom

Power handling: 100 Watts programme

Dimensions: 552(h) x 124(w)

x 93(d) mm; **Finish:** metallic silver

AS1 POWERED SUBWOOFER

Drive unit: 164mm cone

Enclosure type: Rear vented

Frequency response: 27Hz-100Hz +/-3dB

Power output: 85 Watts

Dimensions: 378(h) x 250(w) x 385(d)

mm; **Finish:** Metallic silver

The B&W VM1 satellite speakers can be used in both a horizontal or vertical alignment

B&W VMI

COMPLETE SYSTEM AS TESTED £850 (APPROX) ♦ 01903 221500

♦ www.bwspeakers.com ♦ OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

The two speaker models used in this smart-looking sub/sat system are the VM1 – four of which are in the corners of the system with a fifth front centre turned from portrait to landscape orientation – and the AS1 subwoofer. According to B&W, the 'V' in VM1 stands for 'versatile', which stems from its ability to be used vertically using the pedestal stand and horizontally using a prop which can be screwed to a wall.

Description

The stands, like the speakers, are sturdy, with the pedestal stand being well integrated visually with the VM1s. The horizontal prop support is not usually visible from the front so there is no real attempt at styling. The enclosures are solid and well built, with a rear facing port and quality 4mm binding posts.

The system was supplied with a matching subwoofer, the AS1, which is a very neat, slimline design, with a port and the driver on the front face and the key operating controls – mains on/off, music/movies 'mode' switch and level control – easily accessible on top. There is no adjustable low pass filter, presumably because it is only designed for use with the VM1 whose low-frequency behaviour is known. Nevertheless, you don't need to buy the AS1 for this system. Our recommended alternative is the bigger

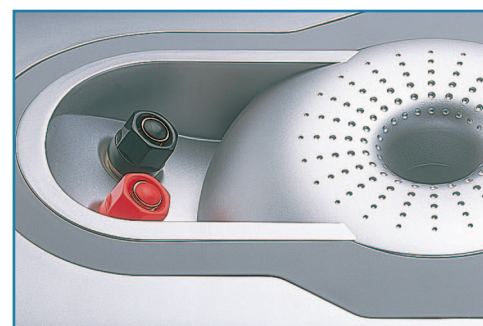
and more conventionally packaged ASW300, which offers greater bass extension and more adjustability for just £25 more – a real bargain if you're willing to put up with the extra bulk.

Performance

Sound quality is excellent, matching and in some respects surpassing its opposite number from Celestion (reviewed overleaf), another high-achieving sub/sat system. The character of the system is one whose sound has plenty of body and immediacy, while the bass is modestly well extended even without the subwoofer. The carefully graduated directivity means that dialogue is quite sharply focused towards the centre of the soundstage, while the other speakers working together manage to generate a soundfield that is open and generously proportioned. Colouration levels are very low and the satellites have a well extended low-frequency response in their own right, which is just 3dB shy of nominal at 75Hz. Subwoofer integration problems are always eased if the handover takes place at a low frequency.

Conclusion

Of all the sub/sat systems in this group, the VM1 with the ASW300 sub (see below) comes closest to delivering a genuinely tactile quality, a sense of physical presence, combined with



a wide tonal palate and real tonal accuracy. The supplied AS1 subwoofer is a different matter. The AS1 is clearly well matched, but avoid the 'movies' setting, which tends to boom.

In addition, the low pass filtering is less than fully effective, which means a not quite imperceptible transition to the satellites. It doesn't offer particularly impressive bass extension either and the alternative ASW300 subwoofer, a much better engineered design, would be an extremely worthwhile alternative for a modest extra expenditure. With this subwoofer, the system really knows how to hark when needed; the system as a whole develops a richer tonality and a more colourful and extended treble, which can follow from improvements in the bass.

